

A DEFENCE OF THE AUTHENTIC GOSPEL: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

(LESSON TWENTY-NINE)

“CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST”

GALATIANS 2:20

(NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

“I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

In verse **18**, Paul makes the point that if a person who has been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, goes back to the Law or to some other system of rule-keeping, seeking to build up again legalistic decrees that have been done away in Christ, he or she becomes a transgressor.

Verse **19** gives additional support for verse **18**. Paul writes, *“For through the law I died to the law so that I may live to God.”*

If it is necessary for an individual to die to the Law in order for him or her to live to God, then it is clearly a transgression for him or her to attempt to build up the Law again. That is the connection between verses **18** and **19**. In verse **19**, Paul argues that it is impossible for a person who returns to a strict observation of the Law, or to any other system of rule-keeping in an effort to be justified, to have an intimate relationship with God.

Paul does **not** say in verse **19** that the **Law** is dead, but that **he** was now dead to the **Law**. He had come to understand that the **Law** could not justify him, but in fact condemned him. The Law demanded death for sin and gave no hope of ever attaining perfect righteousness, which was and still is, the only type of righteousness that the thrice Holy God accepts! But thanks be to God, what He **demands**, He also graciously **provides** in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! Believers are no longer in bondage to the Law because they have died it, and no slave-master can give orders to a dead slave!

In addition, since believers are dead to the **Law**, then it is impossible for the Law to be the way that they are made right with God and preserved in a state of righteousness.

Faith in Christ was the means whereby the Law's strangle-hold over Paul was completely broken. The Lord Jesus Christ lived under the Law; He fully obeyed the Law; He assumed the guilt and penalty which the human race incurred by having violated the Law, and in dying under the Law He satisfied its requirements. He therefore passed out of the realm where the Law in its legalistic aspect had any control over Him. Every genuine believer has been identified with Christ in His death and also in His resurrection, and thus they too have passed out of the realm of divine Law.

It is in this sense that Paul says that he has died to the Law that he might live unto God. His efforts to subject himself to the Law as a means of acceptance with God, in reality had the effect of preventing him from living a life of unreserved devotion to God.

If we are joined to Christ by faith in His finished work on Calvary, we share in His fulfillment of the righteous demands of the law. The Law slew Him and it also slew us in a sense, for we were in Him when He went to the Cross, and we therefore died in Him. We are therefore no longer subject to the Law, for in Him, we have died to it!

Paul says, *“I died to the law so that I may live to God.”* Here Paul refers to the transformation that occurs in the life of a saved individual. He is not referring to living like every human being alive on earth lives, but of living on a higher plane, with the understanding that this temporal life is the first phase of our eternal life with God. God is life and to really live, one must live to God and for God, and it is only those who are in Christ by grace alone, through faith alone, who can truly live and enjoy this life as God meant it to be enjoyed, because it is Christ Himself who is their life, according to **Colossians 3:4!**

It is very important for us to note that Paul did not say that he died to the law so that he might live to **sin**, or even to **self**, which would amount to the same thing. He says, *“I died to the law so that I may live to **God**.”* The purpose of grace is not to give believers freedom **to** sin, but rather to give them freedom **from** sin! If a person claims to be a believer and lives for anything other than God, he or she is not living a Christian life at all.

In verse **20**, Paul writes, *“I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

Why does Paul make this great affirmation at this point in his argument in **Galatians 2**? He has just stated, “I am completely delivered from the Law. The Law has nothing more to do with me, and I have nothing more to do with it, as it relates to my standing before God. And this freedom from Law is necessary to my living a truly holy life—a life devoted to God.” What follows in verses **20** and **21** is his explanation of this thought in which he makes one of the most profound statements in all of Scripture.

In verse **20**, Paul says in effect, “I consider myself as identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, I consider myself as being so identified with Him, that when He was crucified, I was crucified in Him. Christ died, and in Him I died; Christ was resurrected and in Him I was resurrected; I

am a dead man with regard to the Law, but I am a living man in regard to Christ. The life I have now, is not the life of a man under the Law, but the life of a man delivered from the Law because I died and rose again with Christ. It is Christ's righteousness that justifies me; it is Christ's Spirit that lives and operates within me; my relations to God are His relations; the influences under which I live are the influences under which He lives. Christ's views are my views; Christ's feelings are my feelings; He is the soul of my soul, the life of my life. My condition, my sentiments, my motivations, my conduct, are all His. I now live by faith. A belief in the faithfulness of Christ and His Word of truth is the regulating principle of my entire life. All my opinions, all my convictions, all my habits, are subject to the truth about Him. I live devoted to the One who died devoted to me."

Commenting on this verse, the Scottish theologian, **John Eadie** writes,

"As our Representative in whom we were chosen and in whom we suffered, He yielded Himself to the law, which seized Him and nailed Him to the cross. When that law seized Him, it seized at the same time all His in Him, and through the law they suffered and died to it."

The phrase "*Crucified with Christ*," describes our **spiritual** death with Christ, a very real supernatural event that occurred in the past in the mind of God. The personal pronoun "**I**" (Greek **ego**), at the beginning of this verse is a reference to the old self or "*old man*" (**Ephesians 4:22**). The old self or "*old man*" refers to the unsaved person, spiritually dead and totally dominated and controlled by the fallen, unregenerate, adamic nature or the "flesh." It is a reference to all that we were as sons of Adam, **prior** to our conversion.

When we placed our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation, we were so united with Christ that His crucifixion becomes our crucifixion **positionally**. A part of us died at the Cross. Our old self, totally dominated and controlled by the fallen, unregenerate, adamic nature or the "flesh," was slain at the Cross.

When a sinner believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, the old self with his affections and lusts, is crucified. The believing sinner receives the **actual** benefits of his or her identification with Christ in His death on the Cross. These benefits were only **potential** at the time of His crucifixion. The believer's identification with Christ in His death, resulted in the breaking of the power of the fallen, unregenerate, adamic nature or the "flesh," over his or her life. This victory over sin which the Lord Jesus secured for us at the Cross, is made actual and operative in our lives as we yield to the Holy Spirit and trust Him for that victory. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to apply in our lives, the deliverance from the power of the "flesh" which Christ secured at Calvary.

Our "**I**," our old self or "*old man*" was crucified with Christ and therefore no longer has a valid claim on our life, for we are no longer in **Adam** but in **Christ**. This is now our **position** before God forever and it should be reflected in our daily **practice**. **Philippians 2:12-13** must become operative in our lives:

12 So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence,

13 for the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort—for the sake of his good pleasure—is God.

(New English Translation)

The phrase "*crucified with Christ*" obviously does not refer to a **physical** death with Christ. It therefore, refers to a **spiritual** death by identification with Him. He is Paul's (and our) representative, who has borne the penalty of God's Law in our place. In this death with Him, then, we and Paul are freed from the reign of the Law. On Golgotha's Hill, two criminals were, "crucified with Christ," but only one was "spiritually" or "vicariously" crucified with Him, namely the one who, according to **Luke 23:42** said, "*Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom*" (**New English Translation**). Interestingly, the word "*said*" is in the **imperfect tense** in the Greek, indicating that he was

saying, over and over again, “*Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!*”

“*I am crucified with Christ*” says the Apostle. The verb “*crucified*” is in the **perfect tense** which speaks of a past completed action having present finished results. Paul uses it to show that his identification with Christ at the Cross was a past fact, and that the spiritual benefits that have come to him through his identification with Christ are present realities with him. The **perfect tense** emphasizes that participation in the crucified Christ has become the believer’s settled way of life.

By this statement Paul also shows **how** he died to the Law, namely by dying with Christ who died under its penalty. In this eternal transaction, the Law’s demands were satisfied and therefore have no more hold on Paul. But being crucified with Christ, also meant death to **self** to Paul. When Paul died with Christ, it was **Saul**, the self-righteous Pharisee, the arrogant blasphemer, the persecutor of Christ and His church, who died. What he was and did up to that time passed away as far as he was concerned. Saul was buried, and the old life with him. The dominating control of the fallen unregenerate, adamic nature or the “flesh” had its power over him broken.

It is important for us to understand how God deals with the old self or “*old man.*” He does not change or transform the old self. What He does is crucify him with Christ. God condemned the old self and poured out His wrath on Jesus Christ our Sinless Substitute, Who in turn poured out His blood and gave up His life on our behalf on the Cross. The Apostle speaks of this in **Romans 6:5-8**:

5 For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be united in the likeness of his resurrection.

6 We know that our old man was crucified with him so that the body of sin would no longer dominate us, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

7 (*For someone who has died has been freed from sin.*)

8 *Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.*
(**New English Translation**)

Shortly before His death, Our Lord said in triumph, “*It is finished*” (**John 19:30**). And He meant exactly that! We do **not** need to crucify the old self, or “*old man!*” Crucifixion is not something that **we** do. It is something that **Christ** has accomplished for us! We are not to seek to be crucified with Christ because we have **already** been crucified with Him. “Crucified” is not a **command** that we must **obey** but a **fact** that we must **believe!** The old self has been decisively dealt with on the Cross and therefore, those who try to conquer him in their own strength will only experience failure and frustration and will never be victorious! Christ has won the battle for us. Our role now is to yield to His Spirit and live out in faith, the victory that He has already achieved for us at Calvary.

A life filled with resurrection power comes only out of death. In **John 12:24**, our Lord said, “*I tell you the solemn truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself alone. But if it dies, it produces much grain*” (**New English Translation**). In view of this principle, we must continually heed Paul’s exhortation in **Romans 6:11**: “*So you too consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus*” (**New English Translation**).

When the evangelist **George Müller** was questioned about his spiritual power, he responded simply, “*One day George Müller died.*”

There is a great difference between us understanding that, “On the Cross **He** was crucified **for** me,” and that, “On the Cross **I** am crucified **with** Him.” Understanding that “On the Cross **He** was crucified **for** me,” brings us deliverance from sin’s **condemnation**; Understanding that “On the Cross **I** am crucified **with** Him,” brings us deliverance from sin’s **power**.

Brothers and sisters, when we recognize that we have been “*crucified with Christ,*” we should indeed consider ourselves to be, “*dead to sin,*” as Paul admonished in **Romans 6:11**. But we must also think of ourselves to be, “*alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Victorious believers are those who have died in order to live!

It is with this in mind that Paul goes on to say, “*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*” Again, the personal pronoun “**I**” here refers to the unsaved person, spiritually dead, totally dominated and controlled by the fallen, unregenerate, adamic nature or the “flesh.” Under the Law, the “**I**” was prominent, it was that “**I**” of Paul that lived and strived to keep the Law. But in striving to do so, Paul was relying on his own power and ability to do what the Law required, a goal which the fallen, unregenerate, adamic nature or the “flesh” can never accomplish, no matter how hard it tries.

Paul is informing his readers that his **ego**-his old self, or “*old man*” that lived in legalism prior to his being crucified with Christ, is no longer living. The principle of the old life in legalism has passed away, and a new life is implanted within him. The explanation of the paradox of him being dead in one sense and alive in another sense, is that the new life was not his own, but it was Christ living in him. In verse **19** he had said, “*I died to the law so that I may live to God.*” His **to-God** life was no **natural** principle, it was not self-developed within him. It was born out of his previous death with Christ in whom he had also risen again. Christ had not only taken possession of Paul, but He had also entered into him; He had not only made him alive, but He was that Life Himself.

Christ not only **gives** life to those who are His own, but He Himself **is** the Life of those who are His own!

Saul the self-righteous Pharisee, the arrogant blasphemer, the persecutor of Christ and His church died, but Paul the soul-winner, the suffering servant, the least of the apostles, lives.

It is no longer a **self**-centered life that he lives, but a **Christ**-centered one. His new life is not a **principle** but a **Person**, the Lord Jesus living in him through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The new life is no longer, like the former one, dependent upon the ineffectual efforts of a man attempting to draw near to God in his own righteousness. The new life is a Person within a person, living out His beautifully efficacious life in that person.

Instead of attempting to live his life in obedience to a set of rules in the form of the legal enactments of the Mosaic law, Paul now yields to the indwelling Holy Spirit and cooperates with Him in the production of a life pleasing to God, being energized by the divine life resident in him through the regenerating work of the Spirit. Instead of a sinner with a totally depraved nature attempting to find acceptance with God by attempted obedience to a set of outward laws, it is now the believer living his life on a new principle, that of the indwelling Holy Spirit manifesting forth the Lord Jesus.

In **Galatians 2:20**, Paul is describing the nature of our union with Christ in which our Lord remains Christ and the believer retains his or her personality and physical nature. And yet, when Paul says we have been “*crucified with Christ*,” he is saying that a mysterious union has taken place, one that we cannot completely comprehend in this life, a union in which Jesus Christ is now living in and through the believer. This mystical union does not mean that I no longer have any responsibilities in the Christian life. Paul is saying, “Yes, I still live, but there is something so different about my life, for Christ now lives in me. It is not me, alone, facing the demands of life. It is not me, alone, trying to work out my salvation, living out the demands of the Gospel. It is Christ in me, living in me, living His glorious life through me.”

Phil Newton remarks that,

“All of life is lived with the strength and presence of Jesus Christ united with us. We are to live with this consciousness of Jesus Christ

in us! Those who were trying to justify themselves through the Law were working and scratching to meet the demands of that impossible task-master. So Paul contrasts that scene with the reality of the believer. By faith, in union with Jesus Christ, we have died to the Law and all its demands; and Jesus Christ, our Righteous Lord, is now living His life through us. That is a radical life. That is real Christianity."